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A MASQUE
AND OTHER POEMS

BY

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PREFACE

THE poem entitled "How Launcelot came to the Nunnery in Search of the Queen" is an attempt to render in blank verse and as literally as possible the most dramatic episode in the "Arthur" of Sir Thomas Malory. The various tales here told in verse have no legendary foundation except as regards two lesser lyrics, "The Christ of the Snows" and "Adam."

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A MASQUE.

Time: in the fifteenth century. Midnight. Iron boxes. A table strewn with jewels, trinkets, and coin. An hourglass. An old man walks to and fro. (A knock is heard.)

MISER.

Come in.

[*Covers the jewels with a cloth.*

Enter a Woman, who unmasks.

What wouldst thou, wench? Hast aught to sell?

WOMAN.

I 've that to sell for which men give their souls.

MISER.

Alack! their souls. Go seek yon market-place,
And learn what usury a soul will fetch.
The body of a man may sweat you gold,
Plough, sow, and reap, yet at the end be apt
As other carrion to fatten grapes.
How came you in? They keep slack guard below.

WOMAN.

Good looks pass anywhere, like gold, and still —
[*Sings.*

A man and a maid
The warder prayed.
Here is gold, said he,
But a look gave she;
Sweet eyes went in,
And the man was stayed.
For this is the way
The world to win,
The world to win.
Honey of kisses,
Honey of sin, —
This is the way
The world to win.

MISER.

Ay. The fool's world, not mine. The hourglass wastes.

WOMAN.

Forget to turn it, and the hour is thine.
That minds me what the priest said Easter eve:
The Devil owns the minutes, God the years.
What think you that he meant?

MISER.

Nay, ask of him.
Age hath its secrets. Time shall sow for thee

Betwixt thy grand-dame wrinkles answers meet.
Thy errand, girl!

WOMAN.

Look in my face, and learn.

MISER.

By Venus! I have read that scroll too oft.
Eyes that say, Yes! and lips that murmur, No!
The pale cheeks mock-surrender. All the cheats
That make to-morrow lie to yesterday.

WOMAN.

Like a philosopher lies yesterday,
To-morrow like a poet; but to-day
Is true until to-morrow makes it lie.
What if the minute's coin that buys thee joy
Ring false the morrow morn! How old you are!
Kiss me, and live. A ducat for a kiss!
A ducat each for these two eyes of mine!

MISER.

A ducat! By St. Mercury! not I, —
A thing unchanging for a thing that dies.
I 've been the fool of women, wit, and wine;
Have argued much with doctors; had my fill,
Ay that was best, of battle's stormy fate,
Have fooled and have been fooled, been loved and loved.

WOMAN.

Were any like to me?

MISER.

The lips I love
Betray me not at each new gallant's suit.
What are thy charms to these?

[*Walks across the room, and returns with a casket, while the Woman hastily looks under the table-cover and replaces it.*

See, this and this!
[*Shows her gold medals.*

Hast thou the eyes of Egypt's haughty queen?
These eager lips that kissed a world away?
Lo, here Zenobia, — wisdom, beauty, grace.
Hence with thy fading barter! Time shall be
When thou shalt wail in sad confession bent
Before that devil-saint, thy mirror's shrine.
Match me this warrior maid — this huntress lithe
Set in the changeless chastity of gold.

WOMAN.

Their lips are cold. A ducat for a kiss!

MISER.

Nay, get thee gone. Here 's something sweeter far
Than wanton vouches of a woman's lips.

WOMAN.

I would not kiss thee for a world of ducats.

[*Exit Woman, who whispers, as she goes, to a Gentleman who enters, clad in a red cloak, hat, and cock's feather.*

MISER.

Who let thee in?

GENTLEMAN.

A girl, fair sir, — a girl.
Quite often 't is a girl that lets me in!

MISER.

Who art thou?

GENTLEMAN.

Many people. Part of all,
For well-bred gentlemen. My Lord Duke Ṣatan.
Here somewhat late to thank you. Truly, sir,
To sum the seed of sin you 've cast for me
Would puzzle the arithmetic of — Well,
One speaks not lightly of his home. My thanks.
Give me your hand, good friend.

MISER.

Art drunk! Begone!

GENTLEMAN.

Alas! How sad, not know me. Gratitude

Is rare in either world. Yet men, I note,
Know not themselves, and therefore know not me.

MISER.

The jest is good.

GENTLEMAN.

What, I — I, Satan, jest!
How hard to satisfy! Unhelped by me
What hadst thou been? Lo, under this frail cloth
[*Touches the table-cover.*
There lie the pledges of a hundred souls:
That zone of pearls! That ruby coronal!

MISER.

Thou liest, fool!

GENTLEMAN.

The ring, — the sapphire ring.

MISER.

The thing is strange.

GENTLEMAN.

Nay, gentle partner, nay.
Behold I come to thee in sore distress,
A bankrupt devil. Why? It matters not.
Perhaps I gambled for the morning star,
Gambled with Lucifer; in want, perchance,

For reason good, of some less sin-worn world.
Brothers are we. No need for us to pray
Deliverance from temptation — to do good.
Not equals quite. A trifle thou dost lack
Thy master's joy in evil for itself.
Only the crack-brained sin for love of sin,
And crime is wretchedly alloyed with good.
Ho! for one honest sinner!

MISER.

Out, foul fiend!

GENTLEMAN.

To waste your hours were but to squander mine.
Ha! Shall I take my own? [*Pulls off the table-cover.*

MISER.

Without there! Help!
Help — help — a thief!

GENTLEMAN.

Nay. Let me choose my coins,
Let me confess them. They have tales to tell.
I am a devil-poet, and can see
Beneath the skin of things.
[*Takes coins in turn.*] On this is writ
A maiden's honor gone. And here is one
Helped the black barter of a traitor's soul.
This 'gainst a priestly conscience turned the scale.
And this is red with murder. See, gray hairs

Stick to it yet. Alas for charity!
Not one, — not one. The devil has no friends.
[*A knock is heard.*

Save him that enters.
[*Opens the door to the cowled figure, Death.*
Pray you, sir, come in.
Lo, my best friend! The scavenger of time,
Who picks from off this dust-heap called a world
The scared and hurried ants that come and go
Without a whence or whither worth a thought.
Be easy with this partner of my cares.
This greedy dotard drunk with guzzling gold
Spare me a little. Take thou hence the good,
The fair, the young, the chaste, the innocent.
[*To the Miser.*

Good night, my friend. I leave you one who owns
The only truth this stupid planet holds.
[*Exit Gentleman.*

MISER.

What feast of folly hath broke loose to-night?
Who art thou?

DEATH.

Death!

MISER.

The Devil first! then Death!
You have the play the wrong end first, my friend.
[*Laughs.*

DEATH.

Then laugh again. Full many a year has fled
Since sound of laughter crackled in mine ears.
There are who face me smiling. Men like thee,
Who gather ducats as I reap the years,
To add them to the gathered hoard of time;
Yea, men like thee, who poison souls for gain,
And love life for its baseness, mock not me.
Only the noble and the wretched smile
When these lean fingers summon to the grave.
Thy day is near; even now the clogging blood
Chills stagnant at my touch, and soon for thee
Shall come the yellow hags to stretch thy limbs,
And put the coins upon thy staring eyes.

[*Miser falls into a chair.*

MISER.

What cruel jest is this? I pray thee go.
My heart beats riotous, my legs grow weak.

DEATH.

Give me a hundred ducats.

MISER.

I! Not one.

DEATH.

A hundred ducats for a year of greed.

MISER.

Not one, I say.

DEATH.

Then, to that nether world.
Two days I grant thee, till upon the stair
Thy coffined weight shall creak, and other hands
Shall count thy ducats.

MISER.

Take thou ten, and go.

DEATH.

Ten ducats for a journey round the world!

MISER.

Nay, nay, not one. Thou surely art not Death.

DEATH.

Already on thy sallow cheek I see
The set grim smile which hardens on the face
When death unriddles life; thy jaw hangs slack;
The sweat wherewith man labors unto death
Drops from thy brow.

MISER.

Take what thou wilt, and go.
You said a hundred ducats. Take but that.
Take them and leave me. Not a ducat more.

[*Death takes a bag.*

DEATH.

For this I give thee many a lingering year.
Without there, gentlemen! Come in, come in!

[*Enter Prince masked, the Court Fool as Mephistopheles, women and courtiers in fancy dresses. The Miser leaps up.*

MISER.

What robber-band is this?

PRINCE.

A jest, my friend.

GENTLEMAN.

The Prince has lost his wager. Death has won.

DEATH.

To supper, gentlemen. Here 's that shall pay.

MISER.

My gold! Alas, my gold!

DEATH.

But yet you live.

[*Exit maskers singing.*

THE SWAN-WOMAN.

A LEGEND OF THE TYROL.

I HEARD the story told to Kaiser Max.
If he believed it, that can no man say.
Within the Alte Kirche they have placed
His statue, kneeling, sword in hand, at prayer;
And though the cunning carver in his skill
Hath on that face a hundred battles set,
And dooms of men, and many a laden year
Of swift decisions, not those lips in life
Told more they would not than this face of bronze.

Hast been at Innspruck? When the evening glooms,
Go see him girt about with lord and dame,
Arthur of England, Alaric, and the Duke.

In those days every great man had his fool,
And some men were their own, which saved some fools
Their share of fools' pay, cuffs; but so it was.
And now it chanced our ancient fool was dead
And gone to heaven, to be an angel-fool.

Thus, fool-craft prospering, they came by scores
To that bleak castle in the Tyrol hills,
And, while my lady and the knight above
Looked from the balcony, made sport below,
And jeered the men-at-arms, or mocked the page.
But most had wits like bludgeons, till my lord,
A smileless man, save when in shock of arms
He struck a blow that ever after quenched
The human laughter of some gentler soul,
Tired of their jesting, drove them roughly forth.
So out they went, until, one summer eve,
Came gayly singing up the castle hill
A man, — scarce more than man, with cap and bells,
Head up, chin out, just a fool's carriage all;
And strutted gravely round the court, and smiled,
And kissed white fingers to my lady's maid,
Whereon, at last, the burly cook cried out,
"A silent fool; God send us many such!"
But he, "Your Greasy Grace will pardon mé, for I
Am but a lady's fool." Quoth Hans the Squire,
"Ho then, 't will suit my lord, a lady's fool!"
And so they giggling pushed him up the stairs,
And through the great hall where my lord at meat
Sat with my lady and a score of guests,
Pilgrim and merchant, and above the salt,
A knight or two, and kinsfolk of my lord.
"What jest is this?"
"We 've found a lady's fool!
A silent fool, who can but grunt a joke

Like our old boar;" but as he spake I saw
My fool's right hand twitch at his belt to left,
As one through habit seeking for his sword
When stung by insult; flushing deep, he bowed,
Said, "By your leave, my lady," turned and fetched
Big Hans so rude a buffet on the ear,
The great squire tumbled half across the hall.
"Saint Margaret!" cried my lord, "the jest is good.
And this is what you call a lady's fool?
Canst gossip, mock, tell tales, sing songs at need?"
"Ay, noble sir, sing, jest, crack jokes or heads;
But that 's a serious business, and spoils fools,
The cracker and the cracked. Perchance my lord
Would try my folly for a month or two,
When, if it reach the level of my lord,
If I crack jokes as well as he cracks heads,
My lord shall set my wage."
"So be it, fool.
Give him the dead fool's tower; and look you, fool,
Leave to thy betters the rough sport of blows,
Lest to thy grief I take to fools' trade too."
Low bent the fool to hide his troubled face,
Then meekly said, "King Folly's fool were I
To doubt my lord's success." But while the Count,
Perplexed and grim, rose angrily, the dame,
Pleased with the tilting at her heavy lord,
Laughed a sweet girl-laugh outright, and for hint
Plucked at her dull lord's sleeve, while level-eyed
To meet whatever gaze might question his,

Our fool said carelessly, "I jest for dames.
A woman's fool am I, as who is not
Some woman's fool?" — then lightly, wrist on hip,
With something of too easy grace fell back
Smiling and gay. And so we got our fool.

But I, that had been bred to be a priest,
And shut in convent walls had learned perforce
To read men's eyes for comment on their lips,
Saw some quick change in this man's as he turned,
Some lifting of the lids. Orbs garnet-hued
In wide white margins set, and tender, too,
Methought a strange face for a fool, indeed.
Yet somehow from his coming all the house
Grew gay. And never gentler jester was.
For when he laughed 't was like a baby's laugh,
Less at than with you; but he won them all,
Cook, page, and men-at-arms; and surly Hans
He charmed by teaching him the buffets trick
And bought him a new dagger, and had gold
For them that wanted; yet my lord he shunned,
Or, meeting, puzzled him with jest on jest,
Some savage truth in wordy masquerade.
But above all, he was my lady's fool;
Sang for her, — ay, sang to her, I should say;
Told tales of Arthur in the chapel yon, —
Stories of ancient magic and quaint jests
Of masque and tourney and the Kaiser's court,
So that my lady, who was young and fair,

And yearning for some heart-hold upon life,
Like the loosed tendril of a wind-blown vine
That seeks and knows not why, smiled once again,
And blossomed like a bud surprised by June ;
Then took to hawking, to my lord's delight,
With me, a page, for company, and the fool
To call the hawks, or tie their jesses on.
So many a day I followed them, as home
They rode, he talking strange things of the stars,
Or calling bird and beast with cries they knew.
Cursed goblin-tricks, not priest-taught, be you sure ;
Could read you, too, the thing that was to be
By peering at your palm, until my lord
Bade one day tell him what would come about
When he, the Count, should issue forth to take
His turn at beating back the island lords.
I judged the fool reluctant, but he took
That square brown hand on his, and lightly traced
With fingers lithe and white its mazy lines,
Then paused, grew pale, and said, What God doth hide
Leave thou to time's wise answer ; but the Count
Swore roundly that the fool was half a priest,
Yet started up in haste, and asked no more.

And so the fool, because men named him so,
Had leave to go and come ; or at her feet
To lie, and wing with laughter some sweet words,
Or with fierce emphasis of ardent eyes

To look the thought he dared not put in speech.
So love, now bold, now put to timid flight,
Grew none the less for seeming shy retreats,
Like the slow tides that only seem made up
Of myriad wave-deaths.
Yet she knew it not.
Then came the war. To north the Margrave rose;
To south the great sea lords broke out anew.
So late in May our broad, bull-headed lord
Put on his armor, growling, since each year
He could not have it like a crab's case grow,
But guessed some exercise in cracking skulls
Might slack his belt, if helped by scant camp fare.
And scant it was, for some few marches thence
A robber horde fell on him from a wood,
Scattered his train, and plucked him from his horse,
And bore him with them as they fled away.
But Hans they loosed, sore hurt, and bade him take
His way across the hills, and tell the dame
What fate her lord should have if three days gone
No ransom bond came back to bring release.
But two days later fell the wounded squire,
Dust-grayed and bleeding, at the lady's feet,
And failing fast cried out, "My lord, my lord!
Ransom — thy lord — a castle in the hills —
Three days — and two are gone — the third he dies."
Then rose upon his elbow, said some words
None heard except the fool, and so fell back,
And ended honestly an honest life.

But as he spoke, in haste my lady turned,
Some masterful set purpose in her face ;
Bade double guards, call in more men for aid,
The castle put in siege shape, knowing not
What ill might follow next. Then stood in doubt,
Till on the fool's stirred face her large eyes fell.
" And this must end," she cried. " Sir, follow me ! "
And led him out upon the eastern tower,
Where many an eve they two had stayed to watch
Tofana's shadow cross Ampezza's vale.
Then of a sudden facing him, in wrath,
" Sir, was it knightly, this that you have done ?
What crime or folly bade you refuge here ? "
" Madam, a poor fool's fancy." " Nay, 't was you,
'T was you who in the jousts at Ims last year,
O'erthrew my lord, and won the tourney's prize,
Then round the lists with lifted visor rode,
Cast in my lap the jewel as you passed,
And known to none, unquestioned, rode away.
Nay, sir, the truth, the truth." This once again
He set his face for company with a lie,
But looking, saw her red lips droop in scorn,
Nor dared to meet the judgment in her eyes,
So backward fell a pace, and murmured low :
" I came because I loved you, and I stayed
For like good reason ; yea, my life had been
This and no more if I could but have lived
Beside you, near you. For content were I
To leave my peers their strife for gold or land,

And in the quiet convent of my love
To let sweet hours grow to days as sweet,
And these to months of ever-ripening joy."
"Alas!" she moaned, "God help me in my need!"
Because the tender blazonry of joy
Lit face and neck with wandering isles of red,
"Ah, love!" he cried, seeing all her sweet dismay,
"The day is ours. Fly with me, — love is ours."
But then some angel memory came at call.
"Not so," she said. "Pray sit you there awhile.
We both are young, — too young to stain with sin
Of evil loves the weary years to come.
That bitter day the margrave stormed St. Jean,
There in the breach all that God gave to love,
Father and brothers, died. None left, not one.
And then a hell of rapine and of blood
Swept all the town; and I — well, this is all:
The man that is my husband now, he saved,
Alas! he saved me. Yet I love him not."
Then like to one who, stranded on strange shores,
Awaking sees a color in the sky,
And knows not yet if it be dawn or dusk,
A-gaze, he saw the rose-light leave her face,
And, being noble, knew the nobler soul.
"I go," he said, — "the thing I did was ill."
But on his motley sleeve a hand she laid.
"Now that I know how, loving me, love guides
To honor, not to baseness, I dare ask
The man's clear counsel, for my soul is set

To quit me of the debt of given life ;
Since then, perchance, I may myself forgive
For that I love him not, and shall not love ;
And if I ask of thee, because I must,
To do the thing is hateful to thy soul,
It will be only then to bid thee go,
Because I may not love thee, and I shall."
Then he paused, pondering, urged here and there,
Like some strong swimmer whom the waves at will
Hurl landward and take back ; till in strange haste,
As one who fears delay, he spake quick words :
" Now if thy soul be certain of itself,
If thou canst say, Thus will I, death or life,
I hold a charm which to strong purpose wed
Shall free thy heart from bondage to this debt.
Once on a forest verge, I, but a lad,
Set free a Jew some robber lord left bound,
And for remembrance got this little ring :
A face in gold, you see, and o'er its eyes
Twin hands clasped tight. But if at midnight one
Shall turn it, and shall dare with purpose sure
To will that she shall be some living thing,
Or bird or other creature of the woods,
Three days the charm will hold,
The fourth will break.
The winged wood-pigeon knows to find its mate,
And if thou wilt but give thy instinct wings
Thou too shalt find thy mate ; but I, if I
Should crown my follies with a larger jest,

And set my master free, the deed were thine,
Because thy own heart is not more thy own
Than I who love thee." Then in dread he stood,
Fearing the devil in himself; but she,
"Not so! the debt is mine. If death befall,
Death is an honest debtor, and God pays,"
Seized quick the ring, and of a sudden fled,
While slow the fool went down the turret stair.
"Alas," he said, "can heaven be bought with hell,
As hell with heaven thereafter?" Then alone
Turned southward from the castle-gate, and came
To where, long miles away, within the wood,
Three knights stood waiting, and a steed that neighed
To greet his master. But he would not arm,
And saying merely, "Yea, a fool I am,"
Leapt on his horse, and swiftly through the wood
Rode, while they whispered, "Surely he is dazed."

But at the noon of night the lady tied
A silken-threaded letter round her neck,
And on the turret stood and turned the ring,
And looked, and saw — for now the moon was full —
Strange sunsets glowing in the changeful gem,
And mists of color floating from its depths;
And crying, "Once he praised my swan-bowed neck!"
Put all her soul in one fierce wish, and felt
Such change as death may bring or life, and then
Half fear, half wonder, like a soul reborn
Rose on white wings, that trembled as they rose,

And flared vast shadows o'er the old gray keep;
Till in the joyous freedom of her flight
Strong with delight of easy strength she soared,
And caught the warm gold of the unrisen sun
As souls unprisoned win new hopes and joys;
Saw with strange thrills the white wedge of her mates,
And falling gently through the morning light
Lit where the sedgy margins green and brown
Stirred, as with tawny webs she beat the wave.

Some bird-born pleasure luring, long she stayed
To bathe her bosom's silver in the lake,
Till all the summer day went by, and night
With sleep wave-rocked by cool wood-scented winds.
But when another morning brake, and glad
On eager wings she rose to greet the morn,
Too late she knew no tender instincts led.
Wing-weary, helpless, hopeless, sore beset,
Her gold eyes fell upon a train of knights,
And strong with joy that half was shame or fear,
Weak-winged she fluttered down, and saw below
The fool beside her lord, and knew, alas,
What gentle longings drew her to the earth,
Where, sullen with the anger of the dull,
Her grim lord rode, or with wild oaths complained
Because with prison fare his arms were weak,
His eyes grown dim: then of a sudden spied
The wild white-winged thing over him, and snatched

A cross-bow from his saddle, set a bolt,
And loosed the string, and heard a human cry
So terrible that no man there who heard
Lived to forget it, or the thin red rain
That flecked the fool's white cloak, while slowly down
Light feathers flitted. Then the fool turned short,
Caught the knight's saddle-axe, and rising, cried,
"Hast thou, O beast set free, no kindly sense?"
And smote the great brute knight so fierce a blow
That man and steed rolled helpless, and the fool,
Crying, "Room! room!" put some blades aside,
Struck swiftly here and there, rode down a squire,
Cast wide his axe, and spurring wild his horse,
With eyes in air, grim-staring like a dog
His master calls, fled where the wounded swan
Fast faded in the yellow sunset's glow.
But home in wonderment the knight they bore,
Hurt, not to death, and up the castle slope,
Cursing himself, and us, and most the fool,
And marveling much why came not forth his dame,
For none dared tell him that three days had gone
Since any saw her face. So all the house
Ran to and fro like to an ant-heap stirred,
While he, that loved her in his stolid way,
And blindly craved some sweetness never won,
Sought here and there in anger, like low souls
That turn to wrath all passions, and at last
Brake wildly out upon the turret-top,

'Midst man and squire and groom and wildered
maids;
For there they found the lady, cold and still,
The sweetest dead thing that a man could see,
And in her bosom white a cross-bow bolt.

A MEDAL.

PANDOLPHUS MALATESTA, ISOTTA.

MALATESTA.

Why does it pleasure me, Isotta, why?
Canst guess, — I cannot, — wherefore such as I
Should crave to see myself in bronze or gold?
Matteo hath art's courage. He is bold!
God-made or devil-fashioned, out I go
For comment of the world, or friend or foe.
What saith this face, Isotta? — what to you,
As to a gazer chance hath brought to view?
You smile, — dost dare? The soul beyond thine eyes
Will bid you risk all other things save lies.

ISOTTA.

A jewel set in brass, — yet why, God knows,
If God knows anything of such as those
Like me, who fear you not as men know fear,
Being, see you, sir, so little and so dear.
Then lying is the luxury of the great.
The marge of perils sweet. You dare me — wait;
Give me the wax. This side face doth relate

More truth than most, my lord, may care to state.
And yet, not all ; nay, with strange cunning hides
What little good or noble haply bides
For rare occasion. Oh ! you bade me try
At truth as of men dead beyond reply.
Be sure, my lord, I could not lie to you.
Why did Delilah love her great brute Jew,
Hated and loved him ? Riddle that, my lord.

MALATESTA.

Rare old Genosthos Platon, whom I stored
In yon stone tomb, might guess in vain for thee
Betwixt his dreams of Plato, but for me,
Too brief is life to riddle love or hate.
The face, the face, — what secrets shall it prate
When I am dead, and babbling students claim
In feebler days to know who set his name,
Ensigns, and heraldry on yonder wall,
With thine, my dame ? Dost fear to tell me all ?

ISOTTA.

Narrow the forehead ; bushy eyebrows set
O'er lizard lids, cross furrowed ; hair as jet ;
The nose rapacious, falcon-curved, morose ;
Cheeks wan, high-boned, o'er hollows ; lips set close,
Like each to each, large, pouting, to men's eyes
Twin slaves of passion, apt for love or lies.
They who shall read in gentler days that face
Shall call thee mad, and wonder at thy race.

MALATESTA.

Dost think they tell my story? Lo, how sweet!
The swallows flashing down the sunlit street;
A thrush upon the window, — he at least
Must hold me guileless as yon pale boy priest.
Nay, more, fair mistress. How he seeks your eye!

ISOTTA.

'Neath this stern brow forgotten murders lie;
The thin red lips confess lust, scorn, and hate;
Low treacheries 'neath the sombre eye-caves wait.
Ah, where, my lord, the scholar's studious pain,
The zest for art, the Plato-puzzled brain,
The high ambition for diviner thought,
That joyed to see how well Alberti wrought?

MALATESTA.

The earthquake scars the mildly tended soil,
And leaves behind no trace of man's slow toil;
Lo, then, at last you find some alms of praise.
Who sees a man full-faced must meet his gaze;
This side face, mark you, lacks the quick eye's change.
Unwatched, men see it. Ever is it strange
To him who carries it. 'T is like, you say.

ISOTTA.

My good lord, so Matteo said to-day.

MALATESTA.

Now what a thing is custom! You can scan

This face and call me good. See how a man
May scourge through centuries with the whips of shame,
And curse you with the thing that wins him fame.

ISOTTA.

Minutes are courtiers. The inflexible years
To no man palter, know not loves nor fears.

MALATESTA.

Ah! none but you would dare in bitter speech
To front the Malatesta. Doth naught teach
Of all my life to fear loose talk of me?

ISOTTA.

Yet so the meanest churl shall prate of thee,
When axe or spear sets free thy soaring soul,
And its wild flight hath won an earthly goal.

MALATESTA.

Small care have I what man or gossip say,
When axe or spear-thrust come to close my day.
And yet, and yet, Isotta, when my face
Pales on some stricken field, and in my place
Another wooes thee, what wilt say, my maid?

ISOTTA.

Much as the rest. The dead are oft betrayed.

MALATESTA (*aside*).

Not by the dead. No other lips shall lay
Love's bribe upon thy cheek.
(*Aloud.*) How the worn day
Fades in the west, behind yon crumbling tower!
Give me my Plato. Pray, how stands the hour?

THE HUGUENOT.

1686.

Dry-lipped with terror, o'er the broken flints
Stumbling I ran, my baby tightly held,
And of a sudden, coming from the wood,
Saw the low moon blood-dash the distant waves.
Felt the wet grass slope of the cliff, and heard
The hungry clamor of the hidden sea,
Nor dared to stir, but waited for the dawn,
And prayed and wondered why the beast alone
Some certain instinct guided in its flight;
When, God be praised! I saw Count Louis stand
With slant hand o'er his brow, this wise, at gaze
Just a mere outline, none but I had seen,
Set 'gainst the flitting white caps of the sea.
Then I said softly, "Louis," and he turned,
(I think that he would hear me were he dead,)
But as he quickly drew across the cliff
I saw the gathered misery of his face
Grow through the lessening night, and ere I moved
A strong arm caught me, while he cried in haste,
"Why didst thou add new sorrow to my flight?
Who has betrayed it? Surely once again,
When these dark days are over, I had come

To fetch thee and my mother and the boy,
Where in free England we should find a home."
"Home! Home!" I gasped. "Home! Mother!"
for the words
Choked me as with a man's grip on the throat.
But he, hard breathing, held me fast and cried,
"Speak quickly, — death is near!" (but yet his hand
Put back my hair and soothed me). So I gasped,
"As from our preaching in the wood we rode
With Jacques the forester, as is his way,
He fell to singing Clement Marot's psalm,
For them God calleth to the axe or rack.
I, liking not the omen, bade him cease,
Then saw a-sudden, far above the hill,
A tongue of flame leap upward, heard a shot,
And then another, till at last our Jacques,
Bidding me wait, rode on. An hour ago,
While yet the night was dark, — he came again,
And thrust our little one within my arms,
And sharply speaking, bade me urge my horse,
And on the way told all."
"Told all, — told what?"
"The dear old house is burned, thy mother dead!
"Dead, Marie."
"Dead! one fierce pike-thrust, no more!
She did not suffer, Louis!"
"But the babe?"
"Jacques found him near the dial, in the maze."
"My God! there 's blood upon his little hands!"

"Ay! it is thought she had him in her arms,
(Thy mother's, Louis!) and it must have been
She crawled, blood-spent, to hide the little man,
And seeking somewhere help, fell down and died
Beside the fountain."
"Oh, be quick! what more?"
"This Jacques to me, as hitherward we spurred,
For, as we came, a noise behind us grew,
And, haply, I have only brought you death.
'T was but one man, we guessed; the rest, misled,
Rode toward St. Malo, and Jacques leaving me —"
"Hush! listen!"
"Nay, I see the boat, my lord!"
"Be silent, Marie; kneel, here by the rock.
Let come what may, no word." And so I knelt,
And trembling saw the fiery glow of morn
Shudder like some red judgment o'er the sea.
This while my dear Lord bent and kissed the babe,
And then my cheek, my forehead, and my lips,
Unsheathed his sword, and gazing inland stood,
And slowly turned the ruffles from his wrist.
But then my heart beat fiercely in my breast,
For, on the sward between us and the verge,
Came of a sudden from the pines a man,
And paused a breath's time, since behind him dropped
An awful cliff wall to a stepless shore,
And steep the marge sloped to it, and before,
Close at his breast, he saw my Louis' blade,
Red like a viper's tongue, flash in the morn.

Then said my sweet lord, speaking tender low,
"Stir not, dear wife. It is the Duke, thank God!"
So looking up I saw that traitor face,
With eyes of eager seeking, right and left,
Glance up the cliff, and then I heard a voice
Unlike my Louis', hollow, hoarse, and changed.
"Too late! They will not find thee. Quick, on guard!
The crows shall get thee graveyard room. On guard!"
Whereat the Duke turned short. No better blade:
Thrice have I seen him, in our happier days,
Disarm my Louis in the armory play.
Whence, for a moment, as their rapiers met,
Fear caught and held me, till I looked and saw
My Louis' face grow passionless and calm,
As one decreed by God to judge and slay.
Then crept apart, yet could not help but gaze,
Because the thing was terrible to see.
For my dear lord, his face unstirred and cold,
Now touched him on the shoulder or the breast,
Then in the chest an inch deep as he shrank,
Whilst still, now here, now there, the quick blue steel
Struck deftly, and the blood-drops flecked aside;
Till, with each wound, the traitor, shrinking back,
Felt the sloped margin crumble 'neath his feet,
Then wildly thrust, whereon the rapiers coiled
Like twin steel serpents, and the Duke's flew wide.
Then I, I cried out, "Save him!" but my lord
In silence with his kerchief wiped his sword,
And smiling cast the good lace o'er the cliff.

Speechless, I saw the stiff knees giving way,
The long grass breaking in the hands' hard clutch,
Till on the brink — oh, that was terrible! —
A face — a cry — just "Marie!" that was all!
And then I heard my good lord sheathe his blade.
Ah, truly, that was very long ago,
And why, why would you have me tell the tale?
Sometimes at evening, underneath our oaks,
Here in our English home, I sit and think,
Stirred by the memory of a wild white face.
Here come the boys you praised. My Louis'? No!
And this grave maid? These are my baby's babes!
You did not think I am a grand-dame. Well —
You 're very good to say so.

THE SKETCH.

THE sketch was done. I laid it down
Athwart a rock with mosses brown ;
Then backed a pace, and saw with shame
How dead the work. The granite frame,
Grim record of earth's youth of power,
Mocked my slight venture of an hour.
How could I set that thing for praise
'Gainst its immeasurable days!
Lo, here and there, dull mica eyes
Stared from their cleavage mild surprise,
'Neath grim gray sockets lichen-browed.
Too well I knew, and laughed aloud,
For surely comes to us an hour
When sky or rock, or tree or flower,
Finds in our souls that certain tie
That binds God's whole in sympathy,
And bids us wonder, as we go
From large to less, from high to low,
If, past life's line of doubtful fence,
Is lost in rock or tree the sense
That stirs us, or if may remain
Some dulled diffusion of a brain.

At least for me this critic stone
Has thoughts which seem not all my own.
Then piece by piece the sketch I tear,
And cast it on the careless air,
In wonder at the mood could dare
To sit by that mysterious sea,
Nor tremble at its tragedy.
Around me stir the grasses green,
And thick the granite clefts between,
Like little maids that notice crave ;
Lated daisies a welcome wave,
And cotton-weed, and golden-rod,
Shyly beckon, or gayly nod.
Here to left are timbers black
That knew the slave a century back ;
As children steal through a place of graves,
Soft through its dark hold crawl the waves,
Part the seaweed, and sally out
In white-lipped hurry of tumbled rout.
The darkening sky is green o'erhead,
The solemn surge rolls ghastly red ;
The leaping crimson of the sea
Dreams of the slave-ships' agony,
And slowly, on its westering course,
Crawls the dark nightfall of remorse.
My vision of that ancient sin
Is gone.
Halloa ! the tide is in.
Four hours to wait the outward flow :

Time to philosophize, I know.
What space that mocking moon decides
That I shall watch these moving tides
May serve some settlements to hatch
Of points —
There goes my final match!
What test of philosophic might
Is like a pipe without a light?
Let 's see what kind of Eden isle
The tide will leave me in a while.
Black lace, athwart a scarlet sleeve!
Can fate have here vouchsafed an Eve?
Half sad, I pause and think, oppressed,
How years have dulled adventure's zest.
A stern, set face; eyes cloudy blue,
That turn to meet my curious view.
A tree-like dignity of form
Might sway with breeze or mock at storm,
Full cloaked with snow-white hair to knee, —
Thanks, kindly wind, that set it free;
Thin hands that struggle with its grace,
Red sunlight through it, and a face
Ash pale against the fading gold;
The mouth so stern, the brow so old,
As if those servants of the heart
Had lost the sweetness of their art.
Her face disturbed me; but I set
The mood aside, and, smiling, met
The answering smile she turned on me.
"Well caged we are," she said. "I see,

Yon jailer waves relentless be."
Then with strange echo of my thought,
"Time to philosophize of aught
That elsewhere mocks the puzzled will;"
And lightly laughing, "Shall it still?
If lonely darkness look to me
So fertile of philosophy,
How philosophic death must be!"
"Just so," I said, in such surprise
As men will have when 'neath such eyes
Are asked impossible replies,
And, musing, guessed no rib of me
Had ever given this Eve to be.
Then on the granite ledge we sat,
Talked carelessly of this or that:
The wreck, the sky, the tide, the isle,
Of Browning, Lowell, Clough, the while
Her busy hands, with practiced toil,
That strange white hair caught up in coil,
Till silence with the darkness fell;
And save for one drear wave-rocked bell,
And the lone nighthawk overhead,
All earth was still as are the dead.
At last she said, "What trick of fate
Kept you and me just here, so late;
Your sketch, my thoughts?
I have not asked
Your name, nor shall." And I, thus tasked,
Cried, laughing, "Not more curious I!"

"Let pass," she urged, "that question by;
Rest we unnamed as spirits are
That come and go from star to star."
"So be it," I said. "What message bright
Wouldst have me fetch from yonder height?"
"A question more," she added, "then
Leave we the world of things and men;
And if irrelevant, again
You pardon me. You leave, you say,
At nine, and to be long away?"
"For years!"
A sadness in her tone
Sobbed through my brain. I turned. "Alone
Am I, and old; what love gave life
Death hath to-day, — child, brothers, wife."
Was it a tear fell on my hand?
"Thank you," she said, — "I understand."
"The hurt are sorrow's priests. *I* know,
Alas, no years will overgrow
With weeds of rank forgetfulness
The buried flowers of love's distress.
A stranger, on this silent rock,
What can I give you will not shock
Far more than help?" Then suddenly
Rising, she faced the darkened sea.
"Help me a little. It may be
The counsel of a man's strong will
Some ghosts of grief for him shall still;
And yet a word. If, on a day

We meet, years hence, you will not say,
I knew that woman in a way:
Nay, not when death has made me glad.
Absurd you think me, — haply, mad:
Think as you will, or seek in vain
To know what ease the troubled brain
Gets when the anguished voice of sin
Prates to the grated priest within."
I touched her hand. 'T was chill and wet.
I said, "If I should cry forget,
Forgive, no soul on earth has power
To drug the memories of an hour.
The phrase were idle: God is near,
Closer than any human ear.
How could I help you? — wherefore speak?
Why should the burdened language seek?
What gain is won? The words we share,
The sin or grief stays surely there
Where God or chance, or some sad fate,
Has set it. Will mere speech abate
Or jot or tittle aught of woe,
Or cool the hot lids' overflow?"
"You think me answered. Still so much
You know of grief; have felt its clutch,
Yet surely not that mastering clasp
Which crushes like the serpent's grasp.
There is a grief you cannot feel,
The grief of sin that cannot kneel.

You say, to speak, confess, let loose
To man our hurt, lacks reason's use.
God hears ; why speak ? A straw you toss
To one who drowns ; yet from the cross
Fell on the reeling world below
Some words of overmastering woe.
Have you no pity ? See ! my cheek
Burns through the dark that lets me speak.
Think ! think ! A woman, hurt, at bay,
To you, God-sent, yearns here to say
Her soul's hell out. All earthly shams
That burns away, all wordy alms
That shrivels when such speech must come ;
And yet, I would that I were dumb.
Or you, or death, the stillest priest,
Must hear me. Ah, I pray at least
You merely hear me. If at ease,
In days to come, you coldly please
To reason why a woman's soul,
Scourged past all modesty's control,
Sought speech or death, I shall not care."
"Nay, pause," I urged. "Think well, beware."
"And I have thought!" she cried. "If cheap
You held this instinct, could I leap
From silent guard to open wide
The secrets of a life ? I bide
Your answer. Is it life or death ?"
"Go on," I said, with bated breath.

"We cast our pearls to swine. They know them not;
The pearl as ignorant: that my woman's lot.
I loved him. Ah! but not as women love,
With reason, caution, something woven of
What 's left of old love-garments, odds and ends
From lavish likings, lovings, — sisters, friends.
I took one lonely life, and gave him all
My hoarded heart-wealth. Like his billiard-ball
He used a soul: to win with, pass away
An idle hour, — base use and baser play.
'T is said that when to larger life we grow
The loved of earth we easily shall know.
Think you, if death consign to darker fate,
We shall as surely know the souls we hate?
One night, at last, we stood a grave above,
And cast therein a tortured corpse of love.
Smiling and cold, he took a yellow skull, —
My own it seemed, — and mocked its sockets dull,
And bade it chatter of dead hopes. Ah, well.
Twice, thrice I struck him; at my feet he fell
Dead. Oh, the utter joy of that! I laughed,
As one long prisoned, who at last has quaffed
The cup of sudden freedom, — heard a scream,
Sharp words I knew — 'You struck me. Did you
dream?'
Alas! I dreamed. Thence on the days went by.
Ever red mists, that floated past my eye,
Blurred sight of him, and ever still in thought
I lived my dream. You shudder. Think you aught

Is sin for one who, slowly murdered, writhes,
Bound on the rack with custom's gnawing withes?
Was that a cry? a boat? My husband! Yes!
Well, you know surely life's too bitter stress
Brings strange confessions. Should you chance to hear"—
"A pretty chase you 've led me! Ah! my dear!
I trust she has not troubled you at all.
At times she wanders."
"Richard. Thanks. My shawl."

HOW LANCELOT CAME TO THE NUNNERY IN SEARCH OF THE QUEEN.

THREE days on Gawain's tomb Sir Lancelot wept,
Then drew about him baron, knight, and earl,
And cried, "Alack, fair lords, too late we came,
For now heaven hath its own, and woe is mine:
But 'gainst the black knight Death may none avail.
I will that ye no longer stay for me.
In Arthur's realm I go to seek the Queen,
Nor ever more in earthly lists shall ride."
So, heeding none, seven days he westward rode,
And at the sainted mid-hour of the night
Was 'ware of voices, and above them all
One that he knew, and trembled now to hear.
Rose-hedged before him stood a nunnery's walls,
With gates wide open unto foe or friend.
Unquestioned to the cloister court he came,
And in the moonlight, on the balcony, saw
Beneath the arches nuns and ladies stand,
And in their midst a cowled white face he loved,
Whereat he cried aloud, "Lo, I am here!
Lo, I am here! — I, Lancelot, am here!
Would ye I came? I could not help but come."

Spake then the Queen, low voiced as one in pain :
"Oh, call him here, I pray you call him here."
Then lit Sir Lancelot down, and climbed the stair,
And doffed his helm, and stood before the Queen.
But she that had great fear to see his face :
"Oh, sisters, ye that are so dear and sweet,
Lo, this, this is he through whom these wars were wrought ;
For by our love, which we have loved too well,
Is slain my lord and many noble knights.
And therefore, wit ye well, Sir Lancelot,
My soul's health waneth ; yet through God's good grace
I trust, when death is come, to sit with Christ,
Because in heaven more sinful souls than I
Are saints in heaven ; and therefore, Lancelot,
For all the love that ever bound our souls
I do beseech thee hide again thy face.
On God's behalf I bid thee straitly go,
Because my life is as a summer spent ;
Yea, go, and keep thy realm from wrack and war,
For, well as I have loved thee, Lancelot,
My heart will no more serve to see thy face ;
Nay, not if thou shouldst know love in mine eyes.
I pray thee get thee to thy realm again,
And take to thee a wife, for age is long ;
And heartily do I beseech thee pray
That I may make amend of time mislived."
"Ah no, sweet madam," said Sir Lancelot,
"That know ye well I may not while I breathe ;

But as thou livest, I will live in prayer."
"If thou wilt do so," said the Queen, "so be.
Hold fast thy promise; yet full well I know
The world will bid thee back." — "And yet," he cried,
"When didst thou know me to a promise false?
Wherefore, my lady dame, sweet Guinevere,
For all my earthly bliss hath been in thee,
If thou wilt no more take of this world's joy,
I too shall know it never, come what may.
I pray thee kiss me once, and nevermore."
"Nay," said the Queen, "that shall I never do.
No more of earthly lips shall I be kissed."
Then like to one stung through with hurt of spears,
Who stares, death-blinded, round the reeling lists,
At gaze he stood, but saw no more the Queen;
Till as a man who gropes afoot in dreams,
Deaf, dumb, and sightless, down the gallery stairs
Stumbling he went, with hands outstretched for aid,
And found his horse, and rode, till in a vale
At evening, 'twixt two cliffs, came Bedevere,
And with his woesome story stayed the knight.
At this, Sir Lancelot's heart did almost break
For sorrow, and abroad his arms he cast,
And said, "Alas! ah, who may trust this world!"

EVENING, AFTER A STORM ON THE RISTIGOUCHE RIVER.

A MOOD.

THE air is cool; a mist hangs low
Above the wild waves' gleaming flow,
An earth-born cloud, a prisoner fair
Held captive from the upper air.
Its life is brief; 't is gone, unseen
As souls set free. The blue serene
Shall claim it, as of heaven's race
It speeds, a wingless way through space,
As souls set free! Oh, memories fair
That substance of my boyhood were;
What subtile process of the brain
Called that dear company again:
Those honest eyes of tranquil gray,
That heart which knew but honor's way,
And one, the strong, the saint of pain, —
That visage smiles for me again,
Laughs as it laughed when life was here,
Smiles as it smiled when death was near.
What thought-linked sweetness of the hour

Bade memories' folded buds to flower?
The dim horizons of the mind
In vain I search, nor answer find.
The sombre woods make no reply;
The busy river, rambling by,
Is silent; silent is the sky.
And yet to-day this nature dear
Than human help seems far more near;
And closer to my listening soul
The rhythms of the rapid roll
Than any words of human tongue,
Than any song of poet sung.
Alas, the bounding walls of time
Still hem us in; the poet's rhyme,
The brain, the air, the river's flow,
The frank blue sky, the waves below,
Refuse to tell us half they know.
In vain our search, in vain our cries,
Our dearest loves lack some replies;
And thought as infinite as space
May never tell us face to face,
Though sought beneath death's awful shroud,
The secrets of one flitting cloud,
All of a monad's story brief,
The history of a single leaf.
Ah, mystery of mysteries,
To know if under other skies
Shall Nature wait with open hand,
To hold her secrets at command.

O'er other hills and far away
The red scourge of the lightning flies;
The thunder roar of smitten clouds
Reverberant in distance dies;
The western sky, an arch of green,
Fades o'er me, and my still canoe
Floats on a mystic sea of gold
Flecked thick with waves of sapphire blue;

The silent counsels of the night
Float downward with the failing light;
Strange whispers from the darkened stream
Rise like the voices of a dream;
The joy of mystery gathers near,
The joy that is almost a fear.
Speechless the infinite of space,
Star-peopled, looks upon my face,
The patience of heaven's planet gaze,
That bids me wait for death's amaze,
Or for the death of deaths to tell
The secrets Nature guards so well.
Lo, darkness that is substance falls
Between the mountains' nearing walls,
The sky drops down, and to my eye
The watery levels closer lie,
Till wood and wave and mountain fade
'Neath the dear mother's cloak of shade.
She brings for me the scented balm
Her spruce-trees yield; a sacred calm

Falls softly on my kneeling heart.
Peace, child, she whispers, mine thou art.
Lo, in my darkness thou hast found
Content my daylight does not bound;
My silence to thy soul doth preach,
Night unto night still uttereth speech,
And the black night of death shall be
As eloquent of truth to thee.

ADAM.

A HUNGARIAN LEGEND.

FAR in Asia, saith the legend,
On a peak whose nameless towers
Use the plains a hundred miles off
For their dial of the hours;

Where the tallest Himalaya
Rises sad because so lonely,
Whence the eagle swoops in terror,
And the stars of God are only, —

Sitteth one of ancient visage,
One more strange than aught below him,
One who lived so near to God once
That for man we scarce should know him; —

Far above the busy world tribes,
Miles above the pine-trees, bending,
Lonely as when God first made him,
There he keepeth watch unending.

Wearily his eyes are searching
Wide and far amid the nations,
In their centuried depths a million
Pictures of earth's desolations.

And his garments long and ample
Lie as though in death he slumbered;
Never breeze has stirred their stillness
Since his earthly days were numbered.

But their tints are ever changing,
Painted by the woes of mortals,—
Scarlet, mottled, darkened, whitened,
Like the morning's cloud of portals;

For the mists of human passion,
Anger, sorrow, love, devotion,
Rise from town, and mart, and forest,
Float from hill, and field, and ocean,

And with hate and murder's crimson
Stain and blot his mantle's brightness,
Or with love, and faith, and patience,
Bleach its folds to noonday whiteness.

Yet with solemn eyes he waiteth,
Since for sins that rack him ever
One still greater heart grows sadder
With a love that wearies never;

For above the sad earth's murmurs,
And above the pale stars' gray light,
Far beyond unthought-of systems,
And the shining homes of daylight,

One there is, at whose dear coming
Peace and love his robes shall whiten,
When, his earth-long vigil ended,
Death his troubled face shall brighten.

THE CHRIST OF THE SNOWS.

A NORWEGIAN LEGEND.

SET wine on the table
And bread on the plate;
Cast logs on the ashes,
And reverent wait.

The wine of love's sweetness
Set out in thy breast,
And the white bread of welcome,
To comfort the Guest.

For surely He cometh,
Now midnight is near;
The wild winds, like wolf packs,
Have fled in their fear,

Or hid in far fiords,
Or died on the floes:
For surely He cometh,
Our Christ of the Snows.

Along by the portal,
  Half joy and half fear,
Wait man, maid, and matron
  The step none shall hear;

The babe at the doorway,
  And age with eyes dim, —
They whom birth near or death near
  Make closest to Him.

The clock tolleth midnight:
  Cast open the door;
Shrink back ere He passeth,
  Kneel all on the floor.

The stillness of terror
  Possesseth the night,
From star-haunted heaven
  To snow spaces white.

Lo! shaken by ghost gods
  Who angrily fly,
The banners of Odin
  Flame red on the sky.

The last note hath stricken:
  Did He pass? Was He here?
Is it sorrow or joy that
  Shall rule the new year?

The mother who watcheth
The face of the child
Saith, Ah, He was with us, —
The baby hath smiled!

The virgin who bends o'er
The cup on the board
Cries, Lo! the wine trembled, —
'T was surely the Lord!

Sing Christmas, sweet Christmas,
All good men below;
Sing Christmas that bringeth
Our Christ of the Snow.

RAIN IN CAMP.

THE camp-fire smoulders and will not burn,
And a sulky smoke from the blackened logs
Lazily swirls through the dank wood caves;
And the laden leaves with a quick relief
Let fall their loads, as the pool beyond
Leaps 'neath the thin gray lash of the rain,
And is builded thick with silver bells.
But I lie on my back in vague despair,
Trying it over thrice and again,
To see if my words will say the thing.
But the sodden moss, and the wet black wood,
And the shining curves of the dancing leaves,
The drip and drop, and tumble and patter,
The humming roar in the sturdy pines,
Alas, shall there no man paint or tell.

A DOCTOR'S CENTURY.

READ AT THE CENTENNIAL DINNER OF THE COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF PHILADELPHIA, 1887.

A Doctor's century dead and gone!
Good-night to those one hundred years,
To all the memories they bear
Of honest help for pains or tears;

To them that like St. Christopher,
When North and South were sad with graves,
Bore the true Christ of charity
Across the battles' crimson waves.

Good-night to all that shining line,
Our peerage, — yes, our lords of thought;
Their blazonry unspotted lives
Which all the ways of honor taught.

A gentler word, as proud a thought,
For those who won no larger prize
Than humble days well lived can win
From thankful hearts and weeping eyes.

Too grave my song ; a lighter mood
Shall bid us scan our honored roll,
For jolly jesters gay and good,
Who healed the flesh and charmed the soul,

And took their punch, and took the jokes
Would make our prudish conscience tingle,
Then bore their devious lanterns home,
And slept, or heard the night-bell jingle.

Our Century 's dead ; God rest his soul !
Without a doctor or a nurse,
Without a " post," without a dose,
He 's off on Time's old rattling hearse.

What sad disorder laid him out
To all pathologists is dim ;
An intercurrent malady, —
Bacterium chronos finished him !

Our new-born century, pert and proud,
Like some young doctor fresh from college,
Disturbs our prudent age with doubts
And misty might of foggy knowledge.

Ah, but to come again and share
The gains his calmer days shall store,
For them that in a hundred years
Shall see our " science grown to more,"

Perchance as ghosts consultant we
May stand beside some fleshly fellow,
And marvel what on earth he means,
When this new century 's old and mellow.

Take then the thought that wisdom fades,
That knowledge dies of newer truth,
That only duty simply done
Walks always with the step of youth.

A grander morning floods our skies
With higher aims and larger light;
Give welcome to the century new,
And to the past a glad good-night

A Decanter of Madeira, aged 86, to George Bancroft, aged 86, Greeting:

OCTOBER 3, 1886. NEWPORT.

BEAULIEU.

I.

GOOD MASTER, you and I were born
In " Teacup days " of hoop and hood,
And when the silver cue hung down,
And toasts were drunk, and wine was good;

II.

When kin of mine (a jolly brood)
From sideboards looked, and knew full well
What courage they had given the beau,
How generous made the blushing belle.

III.

Ah me! what gossip could I prate
Of days when doors were locked at dinners!
Believe me, I have kissed the lips
Of many pretty saints — or sinners.

IV.

Lip service have I done, alack!
I don't repent, but come what may,
What ready lips, sir, I have kissed,
Be sure at least I shall not say.

V.

Two honest gentlemen are we, —
I Demi John, whole George are you;
When Nature grew us one in years
She meant to make a generous brew.

VI.

She bade me store for festal hours
The sun our south side vineyard knew;
To sterner tasks she set your life,
To statesman, writer, scholar, grew.

VII.

Years eighty-six have come and gone;
At last we meet. Your health to-night.
Take from this board of friendly hearts
The memory of a proud delight.

VIII.

The days that went have made you wise,
There 's wisdom in my rare bouquet.
I 'm rather paler than I was;
And on my soul, you 're growing gray.

IX.

I like to think, when Toper Time
Has drained the last of me and you,
Some here shall say, They both were good, —
The wine we drank, the man we knew.

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